



Petonito's Pastry Shop
190 Main St, East Haven, CT 06512

March 8, 2016

Testimony IN FAVOR of SB221 for Paid Family Leave

From Mark Petonito, Owner of Petonito's Pastry Shop

To Representative Tercyak, Senator Gomes and the other members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees,

I write to you in support of SB221. All employees need and deserve the security of a program like that that would be there for them if they or a loved one becomes ill.

Let me tell you a little about my business. Petonito's Pastry Shop has been in business for over 60 years. I took the business over from my father some time ago, and we specialize in wedding cakes and other sweet treats. Since my father opened the bakery in 1954, we've baked over 25,000 wedding cakes. With the help of our great staff here, I know we'll be around to bake another 25,000.

We treat our employees decently because it is what they deserve and it helps our business thrive. No one here makes minimum wage. We have about a half dozen employees. The full-time folks get healthcare, and everybody gets paid sick days for illnesses or medical issues. They use their time when they are sick, especially in the winter when it's flu season. It gives me piece of mind knowing that they aren't coming in to work and getting my other employees, or worse my customers sick with them.

I'm writing today in support of legislation for paid family leave in Connecticut. I understand the importance of making sure my employees have the time to recuperate from illness without having to suffer loss of income too. I do what I can for my employees. I've found that providing necessary paid time off is important to creating a work environment based on trust and respect. Every business owner knows that keeping valued employees is important to running a successful business.

Just last year one of long-time employees needed knee surgery. He had two rounds of surgery, and took off about six weeks between both operations to recover. I paid him the whole time, and of course he had his job here for him when he was able to return to work. Sure, it meant that we all needed to make some adjustments for a few weeks to cover his work load, but in the long run it was worth it so that I didn't lose him as an employee and find myself needing to train someone else. The fact is, I would love to do this for all my employees – pay for extended leave when they are injured or sick or expecting a baby, but I can't afford to pay everyone's wages while they are gone. That's why I am so supportive of this program. It spreads the cost out to all the workers, who each pay only a few bucks a week, and all I need to do is make some staff adjustments while they are gone. They get the time and pay they need, and I get to provide a crucial benefit to my workers; it's a Win-Win.

Small businesses are right to feel worried about rising energy costs, healthcare costs, and property taxes. But paid family leave is just not an additional expense. In fact, in many ways, providing paid family leave helps keep my business vibrant.

Please pass SB221. Thank you.